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Programme questions: evaluation

Proposed evaluation themes

Note by the Secretary-General**

In conformity with General Assembly resolutions 48/218 B of 29 July 1994 and 54/244 of 23 December 1999, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit herewith the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on proposed evaluation themes, which was requested by the Committee for Programme and Coordination. The Secretary-General agrees with the recommendation on the evaluation theme.

* E/AC.51/2003/1.

** Delayed to take into account the outcome of an international meeting on water issues, held from 16 to 23 March 2003.

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Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on proposed evaluation themes

Summary

The present report has been prepared in response to the request by the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) that the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) propose themes for a pilot thematic evaluation for consideration by the Committee at its forty-third session (A/57/16, para. 257).

OIOS is proposing two themes, post-conflict peace-building and integrated water management, that address current concerns of the United Nations and would benefit from a thematic evaluation.

After consideration of the proposals, CPC may wish to commission OIOS to conduct one pilot thematic evaluation, in a manner consistent with the provisions of article VII of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, concerning evaluation, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation (ST/SGB/2000/8).

A. Introduction

1. At its forty-second session, the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) agreed with the proposal contained in the report on strengthening the role of evaluation findings (A/57/68) that the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) prepare thematic evaluations on cross-cutting themes from among the priority areas of work of the Organization included in the medium-term plan. CPC requested the Secretary-General to entrust OIOS to propose themes for consideration by the Committee at its forty-third session, at which time the Committee would consider commissioning a pilot project on one theme.[1] The present report has been prepared in response to that request.

2. OIOS has been carrying out in-depth evaluations of programme areas of the medium-term plan. These evaluations offer comprehensive reviews of the "relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the Organization's activities in relation to their objectives" (ST/SGB/2000/8, regulation 7.1) and, following a 10 to 12-year cycle, they have contributed to the planning process in the main programmes of the Organization. However, as a result of their focus on individual programmes, such in-depth evaluations have not offered systematic reviews of activities that require concomitant actions by several programmes of the Organization. The proposed thematic evaluations are intended to fill this gap. They will assess the cumulative effects of several programmes sharing common purposes and, in doing so, will provide insight on the effectiveness of the Secretariat as a whole. Also, the thematic evaluations will enable more frequent reviews of important aspects of programmes than the in-depth evaluation cycle has permitted.

3. Thematic evaluations will be conducted in a manner consistent with the provisions of article VII, concerning evaluation, of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation. Regarding the coverage of the in-depth evaluations, article VII stipulates that these evaluations shall be of selected programme areas or topics (rule 107.2 (c)). In practice, in-depth evaluations have focused on specific programme areas. They will continue to do so while thematic evaluations will focus on topics.

B. Proposed evaluation themes

4. Until now, criteria used by OIOS to propose the schedules of in-depth evaluations to CPC have been: (a) the importance of the programmes in relation to the priorities of the medium-term plan; (b) intergovernmental reviews of programmes taking place in the near future; and (c) even coverage of all the sections of the medium-term plan. These criteria can also be used to guide the selection of topics for thematic evaluation and, based on experience, will be further refined. This is the first time that proposals for thematic evaluations are submitted to CPC. To present topics that address the more current concerns of the United Nations and would benefit from a thematic evaluation, OIOS engaged in systematic consultations with all the departments and offices of the Secretariat. Following a presentation in the United Nations Senior Management Group, at the end of 2002, 14 departments and offices made suggestions to OIOS, which are presented in table 1 below. Two topics, post-conflict peace-building and integrated water management, were suggested by the largest number of departments and offices, which indicated that

thematic evaluations on these topics would be relevant for their activities. As a result of this process, OIOS selected these two topics and developed the two proposals provided in tables 2 and 3 below for CPC consideration.

5. OIOS considers that the two topics can be effectively reviewed under a thematic evaluation format. It should be noted that the review of post-conflict peace-building, if it were done under the in-depth evaluation format, would require separate evaluations of programmes implemented, among others, by the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Department for Disarmament Affairs. These in-depth evaluations would be scheduled over a three to six-year period and would not necessarily provide sufficient focus on the selected topic, without mentioning the fact that CPC may not wish to schedule such a cluster of in-depth evaluations. The same comment can be made about the proposed topic Integrated water management. Regarding the value of evaluations focused on a topic, for example, in the case of integrated water management, such an evaluation would assess how well the activities of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) to improve access to basic services, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to promote the use of sound technologies for freshwater, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to support the development of water management strategies and the regional commissions focused on regional priorities, complement and support each other.

Table 1
Topics for thematic evaluations

Topics suggested by United Nations departments and offices, December 2002 (**bold** indicates topics suggested by more than one department/office)
▪ **Post-conflict peace-building**
Related topics
- Policing peacekeeping within the rule of law
- Interface between humanitarian and peacekeeping operations
- Conflict prevention
▪ **Integrated water management**
Related topic
- Energy resources management
▪ **Effectiveness of efforts to mainstream gender within the United Nations Secretariat**
▪ Poverty alleviation
Related topics
- United Nations work on trade law and facilitating developing countries participation in international trade

- Support provided by United Nations programmes and specialized agencies to small economies in developing countries

- Contribution of the United Nations system to the prevention of and response to natural disasters
- Collaboration between the United Nations and civil society: how effective are departments in engaging civil society to pursue United Nations goals
- Communicating the United Nations message in the Middle East
- Working towards language parity on the United Nations web site

Table 2
Proposed evaluation theme: post-conflict peace-building

Post-conflict peace-building

A. Context

As the experience suggests, the period immediately after the signing of a peace agreement is the time when most agreements fail. A post-conflict environment is usually the most complex and challenging context in which the United Nations finds itself. A society torn apart by violence, with the attendant breakdown of its political, socio-economic, environmental and cultural fabric and governance structures, necessitates highly collaborative assistance that is intimately attuned to the needs of the recipient society.

Regarding the application of the concept of peace-building, the Security Council recognized that peace-building requires short and long-term actions, which foster on sustainable development, the eradication of poverty and inequalities, transparent and accountable governance, the promotion of democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law and the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence (S/PRST/2001/5, fifth para.).

B. Objective

The main objective of the proposed OIOS evaluation is to draw lessons from United Nations post-conflict peace-building initiatives that will be relevant in future situations to improve the support provided by the United Nations to the transitional process from armed conflict to a sustainable peace.

C. Scope

An overall assessment will be made of the Secretariat capacity to support the elaboration of comprehensive post-conflict peace-building and rehabilitation strategies, integrating concerns of economic and social development and good governance; and to support the implementation of specific strategies, at the request of concerned States.

Review of planning activities and Headquarters support will include:

- Support to the country team in the formulation and implementation of peace-building strategies;
- Use of existing planning and programming mechanisms;

- Decision process on the division of labour among involved organizations and partnerships for effective programming;
- Links made between the provision of emergency assistance and the United Nations goals of development, peace and security;
- Securing consistent financial support;
- Delegation of financial and programming authority to the field;
- Capacity to provide required personnel to field operations;
- Formulation of exit strategy (benchmarks).

Review of issues of implementation, as they apply to specific situations, will include:

- Respect of international law, support to the rule of law: justice and human rights, governance, national reconciliation;
- Support to the development of the administrative, judicial and law enforcement capacities of the national authorities;
- Creating an enabling environment to ensure quick recovery and promote socio-economic development;
- Promotion and implementation of: practical disarmament measures; return and reintegration of refugees, displaced persons and demobilized soldiers; regional confidence-building measures;
- Review the practice of including within peacekeeping operations, on a case-by-case basis, peace-building components.

D. Methodology

The evaluation will be oriented towards:

(a) Assessing the impact on field activities of the changes and enhancements made in recent years to policies, procedures and resource allocations;

(b) Drawing lessons from recent post-conflict peace-building initiatives that could be applicable to programme adjustment and policy formulation affecting present and future initiatives.

The evaluation will be based on documentation, including recent and ongoing evaluations, from involved organizations, and interviews of government representatives and the organizations' staff. Fieldwork required by the case study approach will be limited and organized in close collaboration with the programmes concerned so as not to unduly interfere with ongoing activities and not duplicate existing or ongoing surveys and studies.

In view of the diversity of the issues to be evaluated, the evaluation will be carried out in collaboration with evaluation units and officials, as appropriate, of the relevant United Nations departments and offices, such as the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, UNHCR, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Department for Disarmament Affairs and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The participation of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) will be sought and other organizations of the United Nations system will be consulted.

E. Utilization of findings

Relevant intergovernmental bodies concerned and provisional schedule of meetings

It is proposed that the evaluation findings and recommendations be submitted to intergovernmental bodies, which would include:

- The Special Committee for Peacekeeping, which meets in the first quarter, each year;
- The Disarmament Commission, which meets in April each year;
- The Commission on Human Rights, which meets in March-April each year;
- The UNHCR Standing Committee, which meets at least once in the first part of the year;
- The Economic and Social Council, normally through CPC, as stipulated in rule 107.4 (f) of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning.

Table 3

Proposed evaluation theme: integrated water management

Integrated water management

A. Context

Overall progress in the management of freshwater has been neither sufficient nor comprehensive enough to reduce general trends of increasing water shortage, deteriorating water quality and growing stress on a freshwater ecosystem.

Over the last decade, a series of international conferences have agreed on steps required to speed up the implementation of Agenda 21 programme of action on water resources. These conferences focused increasingly on issues of water supply and sanitation as well as on the need for improved water governance and integrated water resources management. The United Nations Millennium Declaration stressed the need "to stop the unsustainable exploitation of water resources by developing water management strategies at the regional, national and local levels, which promote both equitable access and adequate supplies" (General Assembly resolution 55/2, para. 23).

A consensus has been formed that water is a critical factor to achieve the millennium development goals, including those aimed at reducing poverty and reducing child mortality. Following the review of progress achieved since the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, in 2002, the World Summit on Sustainable Development further affirmed the urgency for immediate action in this domain, in particular the development of integrated water resources management and water efficiency plans by 2005.

B. Objective

The proposed OIOS evaluation will review United Nations activities related to the formulation and implementation of integrated water management strategies, as well as the provision of water supply and sanitation services. The purpose of the evaluation is to identify adjustments and reorientations needed in these activities to optimize their contribution to the goals of the United Nations Millennium Declaration and the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

C. Scope

Overall assessment of the Secretariat capacity:

(a) To coordinate, and ensure coherence of, activities of the United Nations system regarding water issues;

(b) To develop strategic alliances with other organizations and groups;

(c) To contribute to building Member States capacity to develop and manage sustainable water services.

Issues reviewed will include:

- Results of United Nations technical assistance provided to Member States, over the past 10 years, to support the development and implementation of water management strategies at the regional, national and local levels;
- Effectiveness of the new United Nations coordinating mechanism for water to promote coherence of international activities that have an impact on water issues;
- Presence and coordination of United Nations organizations at the field level: facilitation of national approaches to the integrated development, management and use of sustainable water services;
- Data and knowledge sharing: dissemination of information of operational value to national and local authorities involved in the formulation and implementation of water management strategies;
- Capacity to monitor implementation of programmes and analyse their results in relation to the millennium development goals and the plan of action adopted at the World Summit for Sustainable Development;
- Promotion of enabling legal and regulatory frameworks, and of the institutional, technical and financial capacities.

D. Methodology

The evaluation will be based on documentation from involved organizations, including on recent and ongoing evaluations, and on interviews of government representatives and officials and experts from involved organizations. The impact of water management projects and technical advice provided will be reviewed.

The evaluation will be carried out in collaboration with evaluation units and officials of United Nations departments and offices implementing water resources management programmes, such as the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UNEP, UN-Habitat and the five regional commissions. The collaboration of UNDP, the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Health Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and other United Nations organizations participating in the United Nations coordinating mechanism on water resources will be sought, as well as the collaboration of entities such as the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. Other organizations with relevant activities in this sector will be consulted.

E. Utilization of findings

Relevant intergovernmental bodies concerned and provisional schedule of meetings

It is proposed that the evaluation findings and recommendations be submitted to intergovernmental bodies, which would include:

- The Commission on Sustainable Development, if water is on the agenda of the Commission in 2004. The Commission meets in April each year;
- The UNEP Committee of Permanent Representatives (meets quarterly);
- The UN-Habitat Committee of Permanent Representatives (meets at least once in the first part of the year);
- The regional commissions: intergovernmental meetings will take place, in 2004, at the Economic Commission for Africa in May-June, at the Economic Commission for Europe in March-April, at the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean in April, at the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific in April, and, in 2005, at the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia in May;
- The Economic and Social Council, normally through CPC as stipulated in rule 107.4 (f) of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning.

C. Conclusions and recommendation

6. **After consideration of the proposals presented in section B above, CPC may wish to commission OIOS to conduct a pilot thematic evaluation of integrated water management. Water issues are critical to pursuing the goals and time-bound targets of the United Nations Millennium Declaration, including those aimed at reducing poverty and child mortality and improving the lives of poor people. The Plan of Implementation adopted at the World Summit on Sustainable Development includes actions to develop integrated water resources management and water efficiency plans by 2005, with support to developing countries. In view of the urgency of these goals and commitments, the possibilities to optimize the work of the Organization on water issues need to be reviewed without delay. This is a task to which the thematic evaluation of integrated water management would provide a timely contribution.**

7. **CPC decided at its forty-second session that the pilot project would subsequently be considered by the relevant intergovernmental bodies and that the usefulness of the project would be considered by the Committee at its forty-fifth session, in 2005.**[2]

8. **CPC may wish to consider the findings and recommendations of the pilot thematic evaluation at its forty-fourth session, in 2004, after review of the evaluation report by a number of intergovernmental bodies but not all of them. It should be noted that the thematic evaluation report may not be ready on time for submission to the intergovernmental meetings taking place before April 2004. The provisional schedule of meetings is indicated in section E of tables 2 and 3 above.**

9. CPC may consider transmitting the pilot thematic evaluation, with the Committee's conclusions and recommendations on it, to the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination for action, as appropriate.

Recommendation
Pilot thematic evaluation of integrated water management

The Committee for Programme and Coordination requests the Secretary-General to entrust the Office of Internal Oversight Services with a pilot thematic evaluation of integrated water management. The thematic evaluation report will be considered by the Committee at its forty-fourth session and the usefulness of the pilot project will be reviewed by the Committee at its forty-fifth session.

10. Should CPC opt for the other proposal presented in section B above, post-conflict peace-building, or another topic the Committee may adopt, the recommendation above would reflect the Committee's decision accordingly.

(*Signed*) Dileep **Nair**
Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 16* (A/57/16), paras. 255 and 257.

[2] Ibid., para. 257.